

Somalia: A Failed State?

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ABSTRACT It will not be an exaggeration to say that almost all the countries in Africa face some form of conflict. Yet, most of them have managed to survive, and some—like South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo—have even evolved into reasonably successful states. However, Somalia has not. What are the reasons for Somalia's failure to survive? Did external interventions play a role? Was Islamophobia a contributing factor, and the inter-clan civil war, too? This paper finds that although there have been many reasons, such as unnecessary interventions—especially the case of Ethiopian in 2006—the failure of Somalia as a state is mostly because of a lack of an effective leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, colonialist countries divided Somalia into five parts—the United Kingdom (UK) took two parts while Italy, Ethiopia and France took one each. The Somalis fought for independence from all the colonial powers. Northern and Southern Somalia gained independence on 26 June 1960 and 01 July 1960, respectively. All parts of Somalia would eventually form a Greater Somalia.¹

From 1960 until 1969, Somalia was a democratic state. Through a coup d'etat in 1969, Siyad Barre came to power. Barre forged close ties with the Soviet Union, which provided aid to Somalia throughout the 1970s. Trouble started when Barre attempted to take back the Ogaden Somali territory from Ethiopia and the Soviets decided to back Ethiopia. This enraged Barre, resulting in Somalia and the Soviet Union severing their

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ties. Consequently, the United States (US) became close to Somalia. The US gave Somalia foreign aid for military technology, amounting to US \$163.5 million between 1980 and 1988, and four times that for economic development.

By the late 1980s, after the Ogaden war, Barre's policies in the north resulted in discontent amongst the Isaaq clan. (There are five major clans in Somalia—the Isaaq, Darood, Digil and Mirifle, Dir, and Hawiye—and various smaller clans.²) The Isaaq were the largest northern clan, and they felt isolated from the current politics and state resources. Some moves, such as resettling of Ogaden refugees in northern areas, were seen as southern attempts to subvert northern interests. There was an uprising against Barre, led by the northern Isaaq clan, and in response, Barre ordered bombings of northern towns, villages and even rural encampments. Gradually, the uprisings would spread to the southern areas, and in 1992 Barre was forced to flee.³ Somalia's defeat in the war led to a bitter blame-game. This ultimately resulted in uprisings against him.⁴

CHAOS IN SOMALIA AFTER BARRE

As a result, Siyad Barre fled Mogadishu in January 1991. Troops commanded by Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid pursued Siyad Barre, while Ali Mahdi Mohamed, who was a wealthy Mogadishu businessman, declared himself the new president and formed a government. In the north, the Isaaq clans formed an independent Somaliland. Ali Mahdi's claims to power were not recognised by groups beyond his own control.⁵

As a result of the power struggle between the two warring clan lords, Mohammed Farah

Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, thousands of Somali civilians were killed and wounded. By 1992, an estimated 350,000 Somali people had died due to disease, starvation or as direct casualties of the civil war. Following this, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved a military mission called 'Operation Restoration Hope', entrusting the US with the task of protecting the food shipments from the warlords. However, the US got involved in entanglements with local groups.

In 1993, Somali rebels shot down two US helicopters, killing 18 US Army rangers and one Malaysian UN soldier. A severe battle followed, which claimed the lives of hundreds of Somali civilians. In 1994, the US formally ended its mission in Somalia, which had cost the US \$1.7 billion and left 43 American soldiers dead and 153 injured.⁶

The United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM), which was a more well-developed move to bring about stability to the country, instead of achieving its target, entered into a conflict with the powerful warlord, Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid. The UNOSOM failed, and left Somalia in a permanent state of collapse and war.⁷ Somalis suffered heavily under Aidid's reign and from subsequent fighting among warlords. Following Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid's assassination, Hussain Farah Aidid took over.⁸ But this did not result in a stable administration.

It was only in 1999, through a conference sponsored by the Republic of Djibouti, that assistance was given to Somali civil society groups, after which the negotiating parties came to an agreement that paved the way for the Transitional National Government (TNG). While this could have been a turning point in Somali history, the TNG failed, mainly due to

the incompetence and greed of its leaders combined with the relentless attempts of Ethiopia and its allies to undermine the agreement.⁹

Over a period of 16 years, Somalia had 14 failed attempts at forming a government. One of the fundamental problems was that the TNG was dominated by Mogadishu-based clans, especially the Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Ayr sub clans, and thus was not a national unity government. It faced opposition in the form of a loose coalition of clans called Somali Reconciliation and Rehabilitation Council (SRRC), which was backed by Ethiopia. The SRRC's leader was Abdullahi Yusuf, president of the autonomous state of Puntland in northeast Somalia.¹⁰

In the second half of the '90s, commercial opportunities opened up in Somalia. While businessmen had to pay security to the militia, they did not receive substantial security in return. This frustrated them, and thus, they surreptitiously paid the militiamen and ensured that the gunmen were under the command of the local Sharia courts. The Sharia militia became a reputed security source, more reliable than the warlords' groups. The TNG government which was formed in 2000 ensured that the Sharia militias declined temporarily as the business groups also shifted their support to the new government. After the TNG failed, the businessmen formed huge private security forces to protect their assets. These private groups became the most powerful militias in Mogadishu, unchallenged until 2006.¹¹

Eventually, the TNG was forced into accepting the peace conference sponsored by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The chief directors of

the conference were Kenya and Ethiopia. They chose to form a tactical alliance with the warlords. This resulted in the emergence of a new government led by the warlords in 2004. Ethiopia, through its influence, was able to dictate the choice of president and prime minister to their advantage.¹² The old SSRC coalition was fiercely anti-Islamic in nature and based outside Mogadishu. On the other hand, the Mogadishu-based coalition was supported by the Arab world, had an anti-Ethiopian attitude and contained Islamists in its alliance. It preferred a strong unity government rather than a federalist state and was dominated by the Hawiye clan.

The IGAD made another attempt to bring about peace in 2002. In the past, it was common practice to decide which clan would control what territories. Due to continuous pressure from the IGAD in general and Ethiopia in particular, there was success in the form of a 275-member parliament in August and the 4.5 formula in September 2004.¹³ According to the 4.5 formula, an equal number of places were allocated to each of the four major clans and half the places that were allotted to a clan were allocated to minorities and women.¹⁴

In October 2004, Abdullahi Yusuf from the Mijerteen/Darood clan was selected as president of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Yusuf was also president of the autonomous state of Puntland in northeast Somalia and a close ally of Ethiopia. Yusuf made Mohammed Ghedi his prime minister. Ghedi, too, had very good relations with Ethiopia. The 82-member Cabinet that Ghedi formed, though it followed the 4.5 pattern, was made up of supporters of the SRRC alliance. The TNG was virtually isolated with people associated with it getting no

substantial positions. Moreover, there were charges of corruption that insinuated that votes of MPs were purchased using Ethiopian money.

PEACE PROCESS: AN ANALYSIS

The Kenyan peace process failed because the root causes of the conflict were not properly addressed—and for this, both the Somali groups and the ineffective international mediators were responsible. Some of the militia leaders refused to sit in the same room as the TFG cabinet. The opposition was rigid and refused to consider any capital outside Mogadishu, causing a deadlock. Compounding the problem was the domination of the Hawiye clan in Mogadishu, as the clan assumed that its capture of the city gave them total rights to govern the country. Hence they were resistant to give up power. This was partly the reason the Mogadishu group was so vehemently against federalism in Somalia.

Further, direct attempts were made by the Mogadishu group to sabotage the peace process. Baidoa was captured by two Mogadishu groups to prevent the relocation of parliament to Baidoa. This was a clear breach of the cessation of violations clause signed by all the groups. The role of international actors, such as Ethiopia in the manipulations during the power transition process, was clear. The United Nations Development Program, the EC and the World Bank were too quick in recognising Yusuf's authority, without criticising him for his manipulations. This amounted to taking sides.¹⁵

The militant group Al-Shabaab ('The Youth') was engaged in a dirty game of political assassinations in Mogadishu, against Somalis who were suspected of having links

with the TFG. At least three assassination attempts were made on Yusuf and Ghedi in 2005. By mid-2005, the SCIC was the strongest political and military force in Mogadishu.

A missed opportunity was the failure of the civic system that emerged from the Mogadishu Security and Stabilization Plan (MSSP) in 2015. This was a loose alliance that consisted of some major political figures from the Hawiye clan, especially from the Ayr sub-clan; Hawiye warlords including some in the TFG ministry; many leading business people in the country; and civil society groups.

The support provided by the women's groups and civil society brought a temporary sense of security and freedom to Somalia. The Islamists, militia and the political elite worked together to ensure that the movement was destroyed. It was easy for them, since the civil society groups were unorganised and gradually lost momentum.

THE UNNECESSARY CONFLICT

Among Southern Somali conflicts, the one between Mogadishu's Islamists and the US-backed alliance for the restoration of peace and counterterrorism was the most unexpected and unnecessary. It exacerbated the prevailing situation. By October 2005, the TFG had weakened considerably. A conflict between the Islamists and a Hawiye landlord Musa Sude, over the control of a municipal administration, had the potential to create a huge rift between the warlords and the Islamists. The US government had apprehensions about Somalia serving as a safety haven for Al-Qaeda operatives. The bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August 1998 had increased their

fears. Since there were no local governments, the US decided to forge alliances with locals, including a few warlords. However, this did not have the desired effect of weeding out the Al-Qaeda operatives.

In February 2006, a group of nine Hawiye clan militia leaders and businessmen announced the formation of the “Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism.” But within weeks, conflict broke out. Ironically, the conflict did not start as an Alliance-Islamist rivalry but as a pre-existing feud over property and control over a private seaport between two businessmen on the opposing sides. This quickly became a bigger war. In the three-month war, the Islamic front won almost every battle, and by June, they had taken over almost the entire capital. By September, they had control over areas from Puntland in the north to the Kenyan border in the south. The TFG had a hold over Baidoa and the surrounding areas. The Islamists reorganised themselves as Council of Islamic Courts (CIC).

In the first few months, the CIC did well. They managed to obtain support from the Somali diaspora, emerged as the strongest military and political force in the country and increased their financial and military resources. They also got the support of the international community, which applied pressure on the TFG to enter into a dialogue with the CIC to form a government. They managed to open the seaport after 11 years and Mogadishu's international airport after 10 years. These were considerable achievements by the CIC,¹⁶ and caused the demoralisation of the opposing forces, including the TFG, Puntland and Somaliland. Ethiopian forces and radicalisation from within were the only dangers they faced.¹⁷

From June 2006 to December 2006, the debate was about whether the CIC was controlled by the moderates or the hardliners. The leadership consisted of an uneasy partnership between Sheikh Sharif, a moderate, and Hassan Dahir Aweys, a hardliner. There were complications in bringing about talks between the TFG and the moderates in CIC, because both the hardliners and Ethiopia were opposed to the talks.¹⁸ Moreover, while the US insisted that they contained intelligence reports of a small number of Al-Qaeda suspects in the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam bombing cases being given refuge by Al-Shabaab, the CIC denied these allegations. Aweys even adopted a derisive and dismissive tone. Consequently, the US gave a green signal for the Ethiopians to attack.¹⁹

It could be said that the moderates vs. hardliners debate was a bit overplayed. Many CIC supporters insisted that Aweys had abandoned his jihadist agenda and had become a political moderate. Some Somalis also maintain that Al-Qaeda operatives were not given refuge in Somalia. However, even assuming these claims to be true, an efficient leadership attempting to bring a country out of chaos should not have taken a mocking tone to a superpower, whose intelligence units insisted that Al-Qaeda operatives were taking refuge in Somalia.²⁰

ETHIOPIA COMES IN

On 24 December 2006, Ethiopia launched an attack against the CIC, simultaneously in Central Somalia and in the Bay region near Bedoa. Following this, the general expectation was that the CIC would start a guerrilla war in Mogadishu. However, CIC declared its dissolution and returned most of its weapons

and militia units to clan authorities, subsequently fleeing towards the southern port city of Kismayo where they decided to take a stand against the advancing Ethiopian and the TFG forces. However, the residents of Kismayo refused to allow the CIC to make use of Kismayo as a battleground.²¹ By June 2007, both the TFG and the CIC had hardened their positions. The former did this because they were in a winning position and the latter, because they took the stand that they would participate in talks only after the Ethiopian forces left Somalia.²²

To add to these conflicts, the US Air Force launched attacks against a retreating Islamic Courts Union (ICU) to target the Al-Qaeda militants who were allegedly being harboured by the ICU. As a result, the ICU took refuge in Eritrea. Combining forces with other opposition groups, the ICU established the Alliance for Re-Liberation of Somali (ARS) to consolidate the opposition against Ethiopian occupation.

In early 2007, a small contingent of AU peacekeepers (AMISOM) came and tried to bring about peace and protect the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs). However, over the next few years, attempts by Ethiopia and the TFG to impose 'victor's peace' resulted in a violent resistance from a mixture of clan militia and the remnants of ICU's military wing, Al-Shabaab. In 2007 alone, the fighting between the TFG and the insurgent group resulted in the displacement of around 700,000 people from Mogadishu. The economic foundation of the Hawiye clan weakened. The prolonged Ethiopian occupation created a lot of resistance within Somalia and the diaspora, resulting in the radicalisation of a new generation of Somalis.

When UN-mediated talks were held between the TFG and the ARS, a new and unitary TFG was established, with the possibility of a moderate Islamist government in Somalia. Abudullahi Yusuf resigned and the former Chair of the ICU, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, took over. This was an opportunity for state building, since this government had considerable support both from internal (Somalis) and external (the international community) actors. Unfortunately, just nine months later, Somalia found itself in turmoil again. Al-Shabaab denounced the Djibouti agreement as a betrayal by the ARS. Under the leadership of Ahmed Godane, widely held responsible for organising suicide bombs in Hargeiso and Bosasso in October 2008, Al-Shabaab declared its support for Al-Qaeda.²³ Ultimately, the international community backed Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in 2012, who took over the presidency.²⁴ Currently, the Somali government is having a difficult time dealing with both Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islaami forces that control much of central Somalia.²⁵

THE CASES OF SOMALILAND AND PUNTLAND

Somaliland was a British protectorate for 75 years before it attained independence on 26 June 1960. Before it united voluntarily with the former Italian Somaliland to form the Somali republic, Somaliland existed as a sovereign nation.²⁶ Since 1991, Somaliland has existed as a de facto independent nation. It successfully rebuilt its economy and its infrastructure despite the damage due to the rebellion that forced a huge chunk of its population into Ethiopian refugee camps.²⁷ However, the international community has decided not to recognise Somaliland until the

AU recognises it. The AU, in turn, is apprehensive that it might encourage other parts of Somalia, such as Hiraland, Jubaland, Puntland, and other regions in Africa to follow suit. Therefore, AU, too, has refused to recognise Somaliland.

Deprived of international aid and loans, Somaliland has had to operate on a tiny budget of about US \$250 million. For the most part, Somaliland has survived because of its diaspora sending home some US \$1 billion annually. The sceptics, who are against recognising Somaliland, cite the examples of South Sudan, which is in chaos; Eritrea, which is not doing great; and Somalia itself, which is a failed state, to justify their position and highlight the possibility that Somaliland could also end up like one of these three countries. This makes for a rash argument.

Increased aid to Somaliland following international recognition can help them handle crises, such as the drought that affected the Horn of Africa. The drought left an estimated 4.6 million people hungry. There are also reports of increase in Wahhabism, an extreme, fundamental version of Islam practiced in Somaliland. As French journalist, Robert Wim, puts it: “To refuse formal recognition to Somaliland amounts to punishing those who have been very peaceful: a very bad sign for stability in the Horn.”

The Puntland state of Somalia was created in 1998 and is located in north-eastern Somalia. It boasts a functioning state-like bureaucracy. Puntland never declared itself independent and nominally accepted the authority of TFG. It has relatively weaker government structures than Somaliland. However, it has created relative stability within its area of control.²⁸ As per its

Constitution, Puntland is a part of the Somali state and works towards rebuilding the Somali government.²⁹

US INTERVENTION

The US intervention started because of the cold war during the Siyad Barre regime, when the Soviets decided to support Ethiopia instead of Somalia. The Siyad Barre regime then began to receive support from the US. Later, after Siyad Barre, the US and the UN initiated interventions. Initially, Gen. Aidid, who was leading one of the groups, rejected the UN interventions, up until the fall of 2002. The UN Secretary General ensured that standard procedures were followed. The UN did not employ the blue helmets, since it could deploy them only after all the disputed parties accepted it. Thousands of people succumbed to starvation and disease.

In November, the US State Department proposed that a major UN battalion be sent to Somalia, which would include American troops. The Pentagon proposed a US-led coalition independent of the UN to distribute the aid, with the UN replacing the US forces after a short time. The US Acting Secretary of State, Lawrence S Eagleburger, presented the US plan and the expectation was that they would be handing over Somalia to the UN in three to four months. Boutros-Ghali, the then UN Secretary General, wanted to know what would happen after the new US President, Bill Clinton, who was supposed to take over on 20 January 1993, came to power. To this, Eagleburger replied that if Clinton was against the US forces in Somalia, then the forces would be withdrawn by 19 January. Thus, they reached an agreement. Later, the secretary-general told a delegation from Washington

that he wanted the coalition to not only disarm all the Somali factions but also defuse all the mines in Somalia, most of them in the north.³⁰

Clinton initially favoured a quick handover to UNOSOM II. However, the focus gradually shifted to nation-building. On 22 September, the Clinton administration pressurised the UNSC to adopt Resolution 865, which effectively adopted staying and helping in “nation building,” at least until 1995. Three days later, the Somali militiamen shot down a Black Hawk Helicopter, killing three Americans. This was followed by the 3 October disaster, in which 17 Americans were killed and many more wounded in a fierce fighting in Mogadishu. One American was taken hostage and one of his deceased comrades was dragged naked through the streets of Mogadishu. The administration immediately decided to double its presence in Somalia and offshore and to withdraw completely by 31 March 1994.³¹

ETHIOPIAN INTERVENTION

Ethiopia had its own agenda to serve. With a mostly Christian leadership and an almost 50-percent-Muslim population, Ethiopia had apprehensions of an Islamist awakening happening in their backyard. It also feared that Somalia would become a haven for Ethiopian rebels and that Somali Islamists would form an alliance with neighbouring Eritrea, who were Ethiopia's arch rival; this would later come true. Intense battles between Islamic insurgents and Ethiopian forces killed thousands of innocent civilians. Ethiopian troops shelled entire neighbourhoods, causing the European Union (EU) to launch an investigation into war crimes. According to the UN, Ethiopia has gone as far as to use white phosphorous

bombs that literally melt people.³² Ethiopia also gave covert support to the TFG's manipulations. As discussed earlier, there were accusations that during the formation of the TFG government in 2004, the votes of the MPs were purchased through Ethiopian money.³³ Due to the extreme position of the hardliners in the CIC on the one hand and the Ethiopians on the other, a conflict between the CIC and the Ethiopians was the inevitable result.³⁴

The moderates vs. extremist debate in Somalia is a complex one. For example, was Aweys a hardliner? Although he has been called an extremist, he was the one who proposed including women in the advisory council. He also participated in a civil ceremony for World AIDS Day.³⁵

The rhetoric that came from the CIC, especially the hardliners, did not help their cause. This included calls of 'jihad' against Ethiopia, appeals to the people of Ethiopia to rise up against the Meles government, claims over Somali inhabited territory in Ethiopia, forging of close links with Eritrea (Ethiopia's biggest regional enemy), and provision of logistical support and bases to two armed insurgencies opposed to the Ethiopian government.³⁶ In a last-minute deal to avoid war, there were talks between the moderates in the CIC and Ethiopia. However, this was thwarted by the hardliners.³⁷

The big question that remains unanswered is whether this invasion was necessary. First, after witnessing numerous failed administrations in Somalia, the US should have consolidated the one government that was able to set things in order (the CIC), regardless of the compromises it brought to the table. Secondly, whether Ethiopia attacked with or without the backing of the US, it is fair

to assume that the US could have applied pressure and stopped Ethiopia from attacking. Finally, the Ethiopian and the TFG's response to the Islamist groups' attacks were ferocious. Whole neighbourhoods were shelled, claiming high casualties. In the first months of fighting, at least a thousand people died and 200,000–300,000 people were displaced. The EC gave out warnings that international humanitarian law was being violated.³⁸ This invasion is what led to the evolution of Al-Shabaab into a destructive militant organisation.

AL-SHABAAB AND THE KENYAN INTERVENTION

Al-Shabaab (“the youth” in Arabic) emerged as the radical youth wing of the now defunct UIC, which controlled Mogadishu in 2006. There are numerous reports of foreign fighters going to Somalia to help Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab has staged numerous attacks in Kenya, the latest one being at Garissa University where 148 people died. Before that, it attacked Nairobi's Westgate shopping centre in 2013, killing at least 68 people. Although it has lost control of the cities, Al-Shabaab is still dominant and has control in rural areas. It was forced out of the capital, Mogadishu, in August 2011 and left the vital port of Kismayo in September 2012.

Al-Shabaab has imposed a strict version of Sharia in areas under its control. In a video, the former Al-Shabaab leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane, pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda head Ayman al-Zawahiri. There have also been reports that Al-Shabaab might have formed links with other extremist Islamist groups in Africa, such as the Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb based in the Sahara Desert. Al-Shabaab's credibility took a

huge knock when it rejected western food aid to combat a 2011 drought and famine.³⁹

In October 2011, Kenya, too, sent its troops to Somalia. While the official reason for this was that the troops would address the kidnapping of Kenyan tourists by the Somali militants, there is another possible explanation, i.e., with the exceptions of a brief mutiny in 1964 and a failed coup in 1982, Kenya was by and large peaceful and not affected by military rule like its counterparts in Africa, such as Uganda and Nigeria.⁴⁰ Sending their troops to Somalia would serve as a way to test Kenyan Army resources.

CONCLUSION

The major threat that Somalia is facing right now is from the Al-Shabaab. Somalia's attempt to counter the threat has had some success. However, though AMISOM has been able to pressurise and push the militants in many cases, they have not been able to completely decimate them. Al-Shabaab has, meanwhile, managed to kill hundreds of AMISOM troops and has captured three of AMISOM's bases in the last 10 months.

AMISOM consists of 22,000 troops from five countries and 400 police officers. Counter-insurgency doctrine suggests that at least 47,000 troops are required to successfully combat Al-Shabaab in Somalia. There are other problems with AMISOM, including the frequent breakdown of command and communication. Troops often report to their home cities before checking in with command and control in Mogadishu, leading to delays and breakdowns that cost lives. There are suspicions about a few countries too, such as Ethiopia—that they want to keep Somalia weakened on a long-term basis.

The Somali National Army (SNA), which ideally should have resolved a large chunk of problems, has its own challenges to face. It has stitched together many of Somalia's clan-based militias, whose loyalties still lie with the clan groups rather than the central government. The international community has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in training the SNA. Yet, the training itself is a part of the problem. The EU, AU, the UAE and the US have all been part of the training. However, different instructions have been handed out from different units, leading to lack of cohesion and coordination. A possible solution is for a single country to take charge of the training. Airlift capability is also required, since its lack has resulted in taking over of AMISOM's bases.⁴¹

The AMISOM itself has other drawbacks. For example, some of the forces, like those from Burundi, do not speak English. Very few of the troops have training on counter-insurgency techniques, and moreover, they lack coordination. There are some political sensitivities as well. Somalis see themselves as Arabs and not as Africans. Al-Shabaab can easily label Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia as Christian invaders. Somalia's own forces, which consist of the Army, the police and the militarised intelligence services, are not paid for months, resulting in them frequently selling their weapons. These forces are also infiltrated to a huge extent by the Al-Shabaab forces.⁴²

Ethiopia's forces continuously staying in Somalia caused a lot of discontentment in Somalia. There is no doubt that Ethiopia is one of the main reasons for the conflict worsening. Regarding western interventions, it should be noted that primary motivations and intentions of the US were well-meaning.

Operation Restoration Hope was brought about by Bush Sr to help the thousands of Somali people suffering from starvation.

There are allegations that four major oil companies would have benefitted if Somalia stabilised after Siyad Barre fled and that this was the reason for Bush to have intervened in Somalia.⁴³ However, even if this were true, no fault can be found with the Bush administration for having intervened to save the starving population in Somalia. Every country has real-politik ambitions. It will not be fair to single out one country for such motives.

It was only after the "Black Hawk Down" episode that the US withdrew its forces completely. This led to a further collapse of the nation and increased suffering of the Somali people. Similarly, no fault can be found with the UN interventions. One shortcoming that must be pointed out, however, is that neither the UN nor the US took steps to stop Ethiopia from its manipulating ways during the Kenyan talks held in 2002.

The CIC, when they took over, had substantial support from the Somalis inside and the diaspora. They provided an effective administration in Mogadishu and increased their financial and military resources. They also received sufficient international support that pressurised the TFG to enter into talks with them.⁴⁴ Despite these positive efforts, the Salafist punishments and the implementation of the Sharia law proved to be their undoing.

US officials were deeply concerned about the safety haven that was provided for the militants and were insistent that they possessed adequate intelligence that a small number of Al-Qaeda militants/suspects in the

1998 Nairobi and Dar es Salaam bombings were given refuge by the Al-Shabaab militants. The CIC did not take these charges seriously.⁴⁵ This careless attitude resulted in a US policy shift, with the US giving a green light to the Ethiopians to attack Somalia, which they did, resulting in the defeat of the CIC.

The civic movement Mogadishu Security and Stabilisation Plan (MSSP), which came up in 2005, was a promising movement consisting of different sections of the society, which included Hawiye warlords from the TFG government, many leading business people and civil society groups. If this movement had succeeded, Somali politics would have taken a positive turn. But the Islamists, militia leaders and the political elite worked together to bring down this disorganised civic movement, which failed to sustain the momentum it had initially gathered.⁴⁶

Finally, the international community backed President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in 2012, hoping that he would be a change from the corrupt and inefficient governments of the past. The US re-established diplomatic ties with Somalia for the first time in 20 years, and a handful of countries including China and the UK reopened their embassies in Mogadishu. However, in 2013, the UN accused Mohamud's regime of being highly corrupt and claimed that 80 percent of the Somali Central Bank transactions were fraudulent. In addition, power struggles and internal bickering stalled many political actions and reforms.⁴⁷

The symptoms of a failed state, according to Rothberg, include civil wars characterised by continuous bouts of violence; disharmony/conflict between communities; loss of control over peripheral regions to out-groups; growth

of criminal violence including gangs and trafficking of arms; cessation of functioning legislatures and judiciaries; informal privatisation of education, health, and other social services; corruption; loss of legitimacy; declining per capita income (GDP) with associated increase in smuggling; and the supplanting of the national currency with external money.

Charles Call says that a state can be called a failed state if it is afflicted by all the issues mentioned above. One can see that Somalia, at one point of time, was a victim of all the aforementioned problems. Rothberg goes on to say that Russia and Tajakistan have many of these characteristics but cannot be called failed states. Sri Lanka and Colombia have faced brutal conflicts but have bounced back. Charles Call goes one step further by saying that the term “failed state” should be used only to refer to wholly collapsed states. He then says that in the late 20th century, this situation prevailed only in Somalia.⁴⁸ Rothberg says that truly collapsed states are an extremely rare version of a failed state and that Somalia is an apt example of this.⁴⁹

Can interventions be blamed for Somalia's failure? The fact is that interventions with hidden agendas did not happen exclusively in Somalia. Interventions happen throughout the world. Many countries, despite interventions, stabilise themselves. Sri Lanka is a good example. In spite of the Indian intervention, Sri Lanka managed to transition itself in a proper manner. The Ethiopians, and probably the Kenyans too, had their own agenda. As stated previously, there are charges that Ethiopia manipulated things through bribery and managed to establish a favourable TFG government.

The Ethiopian invasion of 2006 was unnecessary, avoidable and costly, especially to Somalia. Despite interventions by the US in the early 90s to save Somalis, the US, too, must share responsibility, because they could have prevented Ethiopia from invading, if they had so desired. The TFG and Ethiopia imposing victor's peace in the aftermath of their victory over the CIC did not help things. The hardliners in the CIC are also to blame for the instances of suicide bombings, assassination attempts against top TFG leadership, and their loud rhetoric against the Ethiopians.

While there are many contributing factors leading to the failure of Somalia as a state, it has had many of opportunities to regroup. However, they failed to make use of these opportunities. What Somalia lacks is not aid from the international community. Plenty of resources—both human and financial—have been allocated to the strife-stricken country for the past many years. More than anything

else, it is the lack of an honest, effective, strong, and conciliatory leadership that finally led to Somalia reaching the status of a failed state.

The international community expected a lot from President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud when he took over the reins of power in 2012. Unfortunately, there are corruption allegations against him, too—charges that he siphoned off assets that were frozen after the fall of Siyad Barre.⁵⁰

Somalia has to evolve into a democratic country that runs through elected governments with a federal structure, so that there is no infighting among the clans and all clans are properly represented. However, the foremost need of the hour is good governance and an honest, bold politician. Only such a leader can create conditions for democracy and federal structures. If Somalia achieves such a leadership, it may yet have the chance to get back on its feet. [ORF](#)

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ENDNOTES

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